

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, SCUL, SHUM, AR

SUBJECT: JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

REF: BUENOS AIRES 7369

1. GOA BAN ON ACTIVITIES OF WITNESSES HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY ACTION OF TUCUMAN PROVINCIAL GOVT. TUCUMAN HAS A NUMBER OF WITNESSES' ADHERENTS, AND WAS ONE OF AREAS OF CONTROVERSY OVER STUDENT REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN PRESCRIBED PATRIOTIC CEREMONIES WHICH PRECIPITATED PRESENT GOA'S DECISION TO SERIOUSLY ENFORCE 26-YEAR-OLD BAN ON WITNESSES IN ARGENTINA.

2. PROVINCIAL GOVT HAS ISSUED NEW LAW PROVIDING FOR "EXCLUSION" FROM SCHOOLS OF STUDENTS WHO REFUSE TO RENDER HOMAGE TO NATIONAL SYMBOLS, TO PARTICIPATE IN CIVIC PATRIOTIC ACTS, OR TO SING NATIONAL ANTHEM. EXCLUSION IS TO CONTINUE AS LONG AS STUDENTS PERSIST IN PROSCRIBED ATTITUDES.

3. NEW LAW ALSO PROVIDES FOR IMMEDIATE FIRING OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES IN PROVINCE WHO ADOPT SAME POSITION.

4. COMMENT: WITNESSES' APPEAL AGAINST BAN IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION IN CIVIL COURTS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT GOA, AND NOW PROVINCIAL, ACTIONS AGAINST THE SECT ARE BEING UNDERTAKEN IN CALM ATMOSPHERE.

WITNESSES ARE NOT BEING ARRESTED OR SUBJECTED TO BRUTALITY, AND OFFICIAL MEASURES AGAINST THEM ARE LIMITED TO SUPPRESSION OF THEIR

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PUBLIC RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES, BUT AUTHORITIES ARE MOVING FIRMLY AND

WITH EVIDENT INTENTION OF CARRYING OUT LONG-STANDING BAN ORDER. WITNESSES APPEAR TO HAVE SOME PUBLIC AND EVEN OFFICIAL SYMPATHY, AND ARE REGARDED WITH RESPECT FOR THEIR LIFE-STYLE AND GOOD QUALITIES, BUT THE MILITARY MEN WHO ARE RUNNING PRESENT GOVERNMENT CANNOT ACCEPT PUBLIC REFUSAL OF ARGENTINE CITIZENS TO JOIN IN MOST ELEMENTAL PATRIOTIC ACTS, OR, OF COURSE, REFUSAL TO ACCEPT OBLIGATIONS OF MILITARY SERVICE.
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